



STATE OF MINNESOTA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY BOARD

**In the Matter of the Great River
Energy/Xcel Energy application for a
route permit for a high voltage
transmission line and substation in
Empire Township and Farmington,
Minnesota.**

**ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
SCOPING DECISION
Docket #04-81-TR-Air Lake-Empire**

July 23, 2004

The above-entitled matter has come before the Chair of the Minnesota Environmental Quality Board (EQB) for a decision on the scope of the Environmental Assessment (EA) to be prepared on the proposed Great River Energy/Xcel Energy (herein after the “proposers”) transmission line and substation project. The EQB held a public meeting on June 24, 2004, to discuss the project with the public and to solicit input into the scope of the EA to be prepared. The public was given until July 9, 2004, to submit written comments regarding the scope of the EA and to propose alternative routes. Having reviewed the comments submitted and consulted with EQB staff, I hereby make the following Scoping Order.

MATTERS TO BE ADDRESSED

The Environmental Assessment on the proposed Air Lake-Empire transmission and substation project will address the following matters:

1.0 INTRODUCTION

(A brief overview of the process involved and identification of what is discussed in the document.)

2.0 DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT AND ALTERNATIVES

- 2.1 High Voltage Transmission Line and Substation** (Specific features of the Air Lake double-circuit upgrade, the new substation in Farmington, and the new line through Empire Township will be described.)

2.2 High Voltage Transmission Line Route Segment Alternatives (The following alternative segment proposals presented by local citizens and local governments will be described. See more detailed information on these alternative segments of the route on the maps attached to this Scoping Decision.)

- 2.2.1 Rother Bypass #1, using abandoned RR right-of-way
- 2.2.2 Rother Bypass #2, using School District property
- 2.2.3 Empire Citizens #1, retired railway route
- 2.2.4 Empire Citizens #2, State Highway 50 route
- 2.2.5 Empire Citizens #3, modified County Road 66 route
- 2.2.6 Empire Citizens #4, 210th Street diversion
- 2.2.7 Empire Citizens #5, Met Council sewer corridor
- 2.2.8 Farmington City, using RR right-of-way to Hwy 3 from the Empire Township segments v. passing the American Legion

3.0 ANALYSIS OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS OF THE PROJECT OR ALTERNATIVES

(This section will describe the potential environmental and human effects related to the transmission of electricity through the proposed route. These impacts are also evaluated for any alternative segments described in section 2.0.)

3.1 Air Quality

3.2 Biological Resources

- 3.2.1 Flora
- 3.2.2 Fauna
- 3.2.3 Rare & Unique Natural Resources

3.3 Cultural Resources

- 3.3.1 Human Settlements
- 3.3.2 Archaeological & Historic Resources
- 3.3.3 Radio and TV Interference

3.4 Geology and Soils

3.5 Electric and Magnetic Fields

3.6 Land Use

- 3.6.1 Zoning & Displacement
- 3.6.2 Agricultural Use
- 3.6.3 Aesthetics & Visual Impacts

3.7 Noise

3.8 Transportation

3.9 Water Resources

3.9.1 Surface Water

3.9.2 Groundwater

3.9.3 Wetlands

4.0 ANALYSIS OF MITIGATIVE MEASURES

(Any specific measures for mitigating any potential environmental or human impacts of the proposed project or alternatives will be described.)

5.0 ANALYSIS OF THE FEASIBILITY AND AVAILABILITY OF EACH ALTERNATIVE.

6.0 IDENTIFICATION OF PERMITS

(The EA will include a list of permits that will be required for the applicant to construct this project.)

ISSUES OUTSIDE THE SCOPE OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

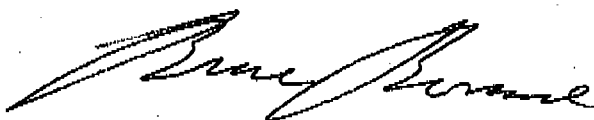
The EQB will not, as part of this environmental review, consider whether a different size or different type of transmission line should be built instead. The line and substation must be interconnected, and no route or route segment alternative that excludes any of these facilities can be considered by EQB. Nor will the EQB consider the no-build option.

SCHEDULE

The EA will be completed by September 24, 2004.

Signed this 23 day of July, 2004

STATE OF MINNESOTA
ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY BOARD



Robert A. Schroeder,
Chair

unc chair
For
Chair Schroeder